THE VIKITA CEREMONY OF THE PAPAGO

By Julian Hayden

796 In November, 1936, a dance, marking the end of a four year period, and apparently combining a harvest ceremony with a rain dance and possibly a commemoration of the sacrifice of the children, was held at old Santa Rosa, Papagueria. The dance, scheduled for 1935, but for some reason deferred till 1936, began November 1 at old Santa Rosa and continued there for ten days. On November 11 a ceremony was held at the shrine of the children, west of old Santa Rosa. A second ten day dance began there on the twelfth, reaching its climax and its end on Saturday, November 21. The following is an eye-witness account of events taking
114 place from twelve noon Friday, the 20th, to the end at four PM, Saturday, November 21.

Our party, composed of Charlie R. Steen, Junior Naturalist, Southwestern Monuments, Isabelle Pendleton and Julian D. Hayden, of Pueblo Grande, Phoenix, Arizona, reached Anegam, a large Papago village about two miles north of new Santa Rosa, at twelve noon on Friday. Stopping
[493] on the south border of the village, we heard singing and jangling of bells in the brush nearby, and saw wagonloads of Papagoes in holiday dress driving into the brush in the direction of the singing. A passing vaquero told us that it was permitted for white men to witness the dancing, so we followed a trail through the mesquite into a clearing, in which stood a dozen or more wagons, each with its family sitting in it or standing nearby.

796 In the clearing was a circular enclosure of tall arrowweeds, about
[417] ten feet in diameter, with an opening on the east side. A group of eight masked and costumed men was dancing in front of this enclosure, attended by a line of thirteen male singers, in work clothes, each man or boy with the half of a gourd tied over his face. Within the enclosure were several old men, also in work clothes, who apparently supervised the distribution of the articles carried by the members of the chorus. These, with an old man outside, seemed also to direct the dancing, correcting steps and gestures.

COSTUMES

796 Since the costumes of the masked dancers were the same, except for
292 minor individual variations, as those worn on Saturday, they are described
536 now. All wore great headdresses of turkey tail feathers, arranged in a
[237] clump tied to the top of the masks. Long feathers, one on either side of the clump, made by tying two or more feathers end to end, with white and in some cases red downy plumes tied to the upper ends, stood erect and waving above the headdress proper. The sack-like masks of deerskin or canvas had small eyeholes and a mouthhole, reached down over the shoulders, and had deeply fringed lower borders. The faces of these

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The fruit, if fully ripe, splits open when it hits the ground; if not, the woman twists off the fruit stalk which bears a hard circular calyx with sharp edges and with this she splits the fruit. In either case she scoops out the pulp from each half with two motions of her thumb and throws it into her basket, while the thorny shell she throws on the ground, taking care that its red lining falls uppermost, for this hastens the rain.

After each round the women pour the newly gathered pulp, of a deep crimson color, into a water-tight basket and soak it to remove the black seeds, which will later be used for flour. Since it shrivels within a few hours if left in the sun, they cook their harvest daily, usually at midday which is too hot for pulp gathering. The mother or mother-in-law officiates on this important occasion. She drains the water from the pulp, some of which has been soaking since the night before, breaks up the masses, shakes out as many seeds as possible, washes and dries these on a mat in the sun, and places them in a jar. The pulp, with double the quantity of water, is brought to a boil in a clay pot, then removed from the fire and placed in a straining basket. The liquid drained off is placed on the fire and boiled to a syrup, this being set aside from day to day. When the whole quantity is at hand it is sealed in a jar made air-tight by cementing a potsherd over its mouth with adobe mixed with fine grass or a transparent yellowish-brown "gum" gathered from the *samo prieto (Coursetia glandulosa)* upon which it is produced by a scale insect *(Tachardiella fulgens)* (25). This is the liquid from which the ceremonial drink *navai't* is made and each family keeps its supply to be fermented at the time of the general ceremony (see also Densmore, 9).

When the juice has been drained off as described above there remain the pulp and the seeds which can also be utilized. All households make cactus jam, the most important sweet in their diet, and for this only a portion of the juice is drained off. The remaining moist pulp is boiled to a sweet, sticky mass, looking much like raspberry jam.

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This stuffed head was fastened on top of the hunter's head with buckskin strings. Two pieces of buckskin were worn over the body to the knees, the one in front which came above the chin being white to imitate the deer's belly, while that in the rear was blackened with soot to make it look like the deer's back; the arms and legs were smeared with white clay. In hunting the Headbearers wore the disguise and walked on all fours, rubbing against bushes and imitating the sound of female deer, and thus could get within easy shooting distance.

The deer meat was usually cut into thin strips and sun-dried on the spot. The tendons were carefully cleaned and kept, the long black tendons for bowstrings, the shorter ones for fastening foreshafts. The brains were kept for tanning and the hide folded up to be used as described elsewhere in this paper. The fat was used to mix paint and for greasing the body.

Arizona white-tailed deer, found in the mountains, was also stalked in disguise. The antelope was much more rarely hunted. Bear *(Ursus americanus)* seems never to have been hunted by the Papagos.

The mountain sheep has for a long time been found only in a few inaccessible mountain slopes and canyons. Once, however, it must have been plentiful, as the Spaniards in the early eighteenth century found on the Gila a midden heap of six thousand horns of animals, deer, and mountain sheep (18). Later Anza (4) found such piles in the western desert. Only an old Sand Papago from Sonora, however, had any recollection of mountain sheep hunting.

Turkeys were usually shot with arrows when they were roosting but seem to have been used only for their feathers, never for food. Coyotes *(Canis lestes)* were also sometimes shot. Although nothing was learned of the utilization of the peccary *(Pecari angulatus)* as food its seems reasonable to suppose that the Papagos did eat this animal since it was commonly eaten by their neighbors, the Pimas.

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Gambel quail was the most important food bird. It was trapped in a very rough cage of split giant cactus ribs *(Carnegia gigantea)*. Mourning doves might also be caught in it though these were usually shot with arrows when they were roosting at dusk; they are still hunted and used as food. No bird eggs were ever used.

REPTILES AND WORMS

The desert tortoise *(Gopherus agassizii)*, known as *komaktci't*, was not hunted but people seeing one would take it home and cook it for food.

The worms used were, when young, about an inch long and yellow, but they matured in a few days and turned green. They appeared in quantities just after or during the rainy season on any green growth, especially the amaranth *(Amaranthus palmeri)*. Everyone dropped work to gather them, for they were considered a great delicacy.

DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

The Papago pets in the old days were dogs *(Canis familiaris)* and a few species of birds. Dogs were used to guard the houses, rarely for hunting. The breed was a small white one, in build like a coyote *(Canis lestes)* but with softer fur and only half the size. Coyotes were kept as pets if captured young.

Arrow feathers were obtained from a species of hawk *(Accipiter* sp.), and these were housed in wicker cages and fed with rats and lizards. The tail feathers were pulled whenever they grew long enough. Spanish accounts speak of a number of macaws *(Ara* sp.) being kept for their feathers at San Xavier (27), but this being before Papago occupancy there is no tradition of it.

Father Kino (3) at the beginning of the eighteenth century distributed droves of horses *(Equus caballus)*, cattle *(Bos taurus)*, sheep *(Ovis aries)*, and goats *(Capra hircus)* to all his missions and to many villages where he hoped to establish missions later.

the buckskin lacing. Another type of sandal is described as made of two thicknesses of deerskin dyed red and bound together at the edge with white deerskin. The "rich" had buckskin moccasins to the knee.

Pouches were made for carrying tobacco, paints and fetishes, the simplest being a round piece of dressed buckskin fringed all around the edge and tied up with a thong. All those made at present are of dyed buckskin (colored red with dye from the root of *Krameria glandulosa)* made of two semi-circular pieces sewed together, with fringe around the seam and a flap fastened by a knot of thong serving as a button. Others were made of rabbit skin *(Lepus* sp.) or sometimes fox *(Vulpes fulvus)* with the fur left on.

No headdress was ordinarily worn, although warriors had various caps and ornaments. The *siwoṭ* was a single upright plume, stuck in a headband which might be woven or be merely a deerskin thong. The *pitcpoṭ* was a row of feathers around the head like a crown thrust under a buckskin band. A more elaborate bonnet was the *acki wonam* —a buckskin cap with upright feathers sewed closely all over it with an especially high tuft on the top. There is also mention of a cap of peccary skin *(Pecari angulatus)* fitting closely to the head with upright eagle *(Aquila chrysaetos)* or hawk feathers (because they are the best fighters) sewed around its edge and a mask of buckskin hanging over the face and tied around the neck. Warriors might also tie a bunch of eagledown to the hair at the top of the head, or some long feathers to the hair at the back.

Men wishing to keep their hair out of their eyes tied it with a deerskin thong, or for gala occasions with a woven headband of red and white cotton. For war they tied it at the back of the neck with a deerskin thong, then twisted the mass into a short club wound about with deerskin, and this was specifically called the war knot. Women always wore their hair loose except for a thong or a twist of grass tied around the forehead while working. In racing they brought the whole mass of hair up over the forehead and back again,

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binding it with a strip of soapweed *(Yucca glauca)*. The hair was brushed with the combination brush and comb made of a bundle of aloe fibers *(Agave americana)*.

The Papago myths tell of Elder Brother wearing bright feathers, probably macaw *(Ara* sp.), and a Spanish account records:

> At San Xavier del Bac and neighboring rancherias there are many macaws which the Pimas raise because of the beautiful feathers of red and other colors, almost like those of the peacock, which they strip from these birds in the spring for their adornment (27, p. 129).

Both sexes wore necklaces and earrings and hunters particularly made handsome necklaces of deer teeth. Women were tattooed with vertical lines on the chin, a woman specialist doing the work for which she was paid a necklace or a basket of corn. Her piercing instrument was four sahuaro needles *(Carnegia gigantea)* tied in a row with a shred of yucca fiber *(Yucca glauca)*. She pinched up the skin between her forefinger and thumb and pierced it, and many patients had crooked lines because they winced. Into the holes she rubbed charcoal from a fire of creosote bush *(Covillea glutinosa)* which leaves a permanent greenish blue color. The ears of both sexes were pierced early in childhood with an ocotillo thorn *(Fouquieria splendens)*.

Paints were made from clay, charcoal, specular iron, and vegetable dyes, and since the upper part of the body was habitually naked it provided plenty of field for design. Vegetable dyes were rather rarely used and then only by women. Red dye was obtained from the root of *Krameria glandulosa* while the pollen of a reed (probably *Arundo donax)* provided a yellow dye. In daily life older men and women did not paint, but smeared deer grease over the body when necessary for warmth, as did hunters and warriors before going on an expedition.

The root of the soapweed *(Yucca glauca)* was dried, pulverized, and mixed with water to form suds for washing the hair.

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game. The stone tip was set in a foreshaft of hardwood, usually creosote bush *(Covillea glutinosa)*, although wood of the desert broom *(Baccharis sarothroides)*, or the soapberry or Chinaberry tree *(Sapindus drummondii)*, might also be used. The twigs were cut green, peeled and straightened by hand or with a stone arrow straightener, then laid away to dry. On the day of the arrow making they were split at one end to receive the tip and dipped in boiling "gum," which must always be the secretion found on the white brittlebush *(Encelia farinosa)*, since mesquite "gum" melts in the sun and creosote bush "gum" is too sticky and adheres when the arrow goes through the grass. The arrow point was inserted in the slit at the end of the twig and when the "gum" had cooled, tied with a wet sinew. For shaft material a piece of the flower stalk of the Spanish Bayonet *(Yucca elata)*, which is very light when dried, was used. However they also used for this purpose a reed (probably *Phragmites communis)*, which they picked along the streams of the Pima country when they went there to work or trade. A hole two inches deep for the insertion of the foreshaft was bored in the pithy center of the shaft with a stick of creosote bush *(Covillea glutinosa)* sharpened to a point and roughened for friction with a stone. The end of the foreshaft was pointed with a quartz scraper, the foreshaft pounded into the hole and deer sinew wrapped around the joint for the whole of its length.

The preferred feathers for war arrows were those of the eagle *(Aquila chrysaetos)* and of three genera of hawks. The buzzard *(Cathartes aura septentrionalis)*, turkey *(Meleagris gallopavo merriami)* and crow *(Corvus brachyrhynchos hesperis)* were ineligible "as the buzzard is stupid and does not kill and the other two birds are timid." Chicken hawks *(Accipiter* sp.) were kept in cages and their tail feathers plucked.

The quill was reduced by cutting off the tip to about five inches in length, after which it was split and the inside cleaned with the thumbnail. It was then scraped bare for

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237 half an inch at each end and laid in a slightly spiral direc-
411 tion on the shaft just behind the nock, and both bare ends of the quill were bound on with wet sinew. Either two or three feathers were used for war arrows.

411 Wooden-tipped arrows were made of wood of the creosote bush *(Covillea glutinosa)* or of the arrow bush *(Pluchea sericea)* and might be full length with the tip rubbed sharp on a stone and hardened in the fire; or they might have a shaft of reed or Spanish Bayonet *(Yucca elata)* for three quarters of their length. This made an exceedingly light arrow particularly desirable for birds.

411 Quivers are of comparatively recent invention. Some
415 were made from the skins of such animals as the mountain lion *(Felis oregonensis hippolestes)*, wildcat *(Lynx ruffus)* or coyote *(Canis lestes)* with the hair left on, the skin not being softened but sewed up while fresh and allowed to dry hard. The legs and tail were cut off (excepting the coyote whose tail was left for decoration) and the skin sewed up in rough bag shape. The head, from which the skull was removed, was left on and stuffed with grass so it would dry into the proper shape. The hollow head served as a hood over the arrows.

All these skins made small quivers and were used in hunting. For war, large quivers were made of antelope hide *(Antilocapra americana)*, and such hide was cut and sewed in the shape of a cylinder a foot in diameter. In some cases a fringe of dressed buckskin appeared down the vertical seam.

Particular individuals had their quivers made of dressed and softened hide, generally from the white-tailed
[533] deer *(Odocoileus couesi)* or antelope. These might have a fringe down the seam and a painted design of some brave animal on the back, the design being outlined with the secre-
[384] tion from the white brittlebush *(Encelia farinosa)*, then smeared over with red clay. Sometimes a yellow paint made from Spanish Bayonet flowers *(Yucca elata)*, ground to powder, was used. The quiver was slung by a strap two